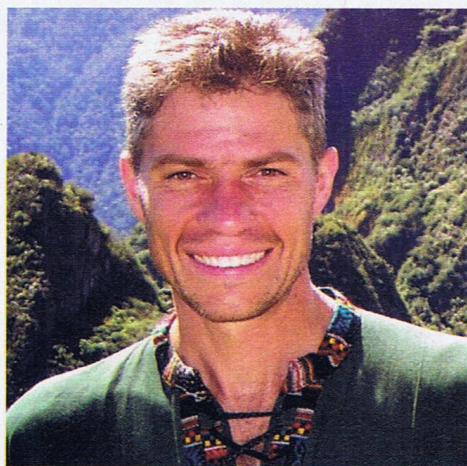


# Racewalking: an alternative for high school distance runners?

by Dave McGovern



**N**ot every high school distance runner you coach is going to be a success as a distance runner. But some of them might be able to enjoy success in racewalking, up to and including a college scholarship and international competition.

Yes, racewalking. It's an alternative you might want to consider offering to your distance runners, especially those who love training — and competition — but don't necessarily have all the tools needed to become really successful distance runners.

Of course, you may have to help them find coaching and competition outside of the formal school set-up, but as an educator, you may be doing them a big favor, and once they get started, they'll take care of themselves.

Although many high schoolers — maybe including your kids — have never heard of racewalking, it has been an Olympic track and field discipline since 1908, and it continues to be contested today at the Olympics and IAAF World

Championships for both men and women.

Maine and New York are the only states which include racewalking in their high school track programs. But there are quite a few opportunities — Junior Olympics, Age Group and the like — for young athletes, male and female, who take up racewalking and work hard at it.

There are local, regional, state and national races at every level from beginners and fun races to the very top level. The USA Track & Field (USATF) and Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) youth programs offer opportunities to travel, meet new people, compete at the championship level, and enjoy success and recognition.

Interestingly, many of the most successful racewalkers started out as distance runners — often as the kind of distance runner who feels “The longer the distance, the better I like it.”

Racewalking also attracts the type of youngster who likes a challenge — because it is a unique “combination event” that requires the stamina of distance running with an added technique element that takes time and intelligence to master. There's a long-range benefit, too: racewalking is a sport that keeps its participants fit for life, and builds many lifelong friendships.

There are also college scholarships available. The University of Rochester, the University of Wisconsin at Parkside, Virginia Intermont College, and Mansfield University are some of the many NAIA and NCAA Division II colleges that offer scholarships to racewalkers. For a fairly complete list of colleges that offer racewalking scholarships, see [\[inghealthy.com/Resources/Schools.asp\]\(http://inghealthy.com/Resources/Schools.asp\).](http://www.walk-</a></p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

To get started, there are racewalking programs and clubs all over the country that you and your beginning walkers can hook up with on the Internet. Some are listed at the end of this article, and many of them have coaches who specialize in walking. Your athletes can also probably Google up some I don't know about.

When it comes to competitions available for walkers, racing at the Junior Olympic and high school level is chiefly at one mile. But most racewalk events in the United States are at least 3,000 meters (1.86 miles) and up — “up” meaning 5,000 meters (3.1 miles) and 10,000 meters (6.2 miles).

The standard international distances are even longer. The “sprint” event is the 20-kilometer (12.4 miles) race for men and women while the 50-kilometers (31 miles) for men is five miles longer than the marathon.

For those who keep at it, there are opportunities to earn a United States team uniform and go on trips representing the USA in international meets — including the World Championships and the Olympic Games. Every U.S. Olympic team has six racewalking spots for men, and three for women. And in non-Olympic years there are opportunities to compete in the Pan American Games, and the IAAF World Cup and Pan Am Cup competitions. At the recent IAAF Racewalking World Cup in La Coruna, Spain, \$500,000 in prize money was awarded.

Think about it. Are there some boys and girls on your team — or in your school — who might be just right for racewalk-



# racewalking

ing? Here are some resources to help you and them find clubs, coaching, and competitive opportunities.

## USATF

The USATF Junior Olympic program features 1,500m, 3,000m and 5,000m race-walk competitions in 2-year age divisions from 10 & under through 17-18. Progressional events consisting of preliminary, Association, and Regional meets lead up to the National Championships. For information on USATF youth meets and links to local clubs and coaches go to [www.usatf.org/groups/Youth/](http://www.usatf.org/groups/Youth/).

## AAU

The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) is an all-sports organization that offers a track & field program that "competes" with USATF's series. The AAU program offers a similar set of local and regional meets leading up to the indoor and outdoor championships. Details and information on local clubs at: [www.aaathletics.org/](http://www.aaathletics.org/).

## Web sites

A number of web sites offer advice, books and videos, race walking clinic information, and links to local clubs. Among the most popular are: [www.Racewalking.org](http://www.Racewalking.org), [www.Racewalk.com](http://www.Racewalk.com), and [http://members.aol.com/\\_ht\\_a/rayzwocker/world-class/contacts.htm](http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/rayzwocker/world-class/contacts.htm) (this is a good one to find clubs and coaches). Many more will show up if you type in "Racewalking" on Google.

## Books

*Racewalk to Fitness*, by Howard Jacobson

*The Art of Fast Walking*, by Ron Laird

*The Complete Guide to Racewalking*, by Dave McGovern

*The Complete Guide to Marathon Racewalking*, by Dave McGovern

*Advanced Racewalking*, by Martin Rudow

*Race Walk Like a Champion*, by Jeff Salvage

*Walk Like an Athlete*, by Jeff Salvage

## Videos/DVDs

*How to Walk Faster—Tips from the Pros*, by Elaine Ward

*Race Walk Like a Champion DVD Set*, by Jeff Salvage

*Walk Like an Athlete Video*, by Jeff Salvage

Dave McGovern is a member of the U.S. National Racewalking Team and the author of *The Complete Guide to Racewalking and The Complete Guide to Marathon Walking*. Visit his web site at [www.racewalking.org](http://www.racewalking.org).

**Shooting Star Media, Inc.**  
proudly publishes the following titles:

Track & Field  
ATHLETES  
California Track & Field News  
COACHING ATHLETICS  
LATINOS CORRIENDO  
WORLD'S OF GOLD!  
Runner and Triathlete

[www.shootingstarmediainc.com](http://www.shootingstarmediainc.com)

Shooting Star Media, Inc. is proudly represented by Running Network, LLC.

For advertising inquiries, please call 608.239.3785, or e-mail [Larry.Eder@gmail.com](mailto:Larry.Eder@gmail.com).